

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
AT KNOXVILLE

)
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,)
)
)
Plaintiff,)
)
vs.) Case No.: 3:19-CR-95
)
)
TAYLOR E. MEADOWS,)
)
Defendant.)
)

**CHANGE OF PLEA PROCEEDINGS
BEFORE THE HONORABLE THOMAS A. VARLAN**

**January 31, 2020
11:02 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.**

APPEARANCES:

FOR THE PLAINTIFF: KEVIN QUENCER, ESQUIRE
Assistant United States Attorney
United States Department of Justice
Office of the United States Attorney
800 Market Street
Suite 211
Knoxville, Tennessee 37902

FOR THE DEFENDANT: MARK E. BROWN, ESQUIRE
Menefee & Brown, LLP
9724 Kingston Pike
Suite 505
Knoxville, Tennessee 37922

ALSO PRESENT: TAYLOR E. MEADOWS, DEFENDANT

(Proceedings recorded by mechanical stenography, transcript produced by computer-aided transcription.)

REPORTED BY:

Rebekah M. Lockwood, RDR, CRR
Official Court Reporter
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P.O. Box 173496, Tampa, Florida 33672

1 (Call to Order of the Court)

2 THE COURT: Let's call up the next case.

3 THE COURTROOM DEPUTY: Criminal Action 3:19-CR-95,
4 United States of America versus Taylor Meadows.

5 Mr. Kevin Quencer is here on behalf of the
6 government. Is the government present and ready to proceed?

7 MR. QUENCER: We are. Good morning, Your Honor.

8 THE COURT: Morning.

9 THE COURTROOM DEPUTY: Mr. Mark Brown is here on
10 behalf of the defendant. Is the defendant present and ready to
11 proceed?

12 MR. BROWN: Present and ready, Your Honor.

13 THE COURT: All right. Thank you. We'll ask the
14 United States attorney to please give us the status of this
15 case.

16 MR. QUENCER: Yes, Judge. The plea agreement has
17 been filed in this case, and the defendant wishes to change her
18 plea from guilty to not guilty -- sorry, from not guilty to
19 guilty.

20 THE COURT: Thank you.

21 Good morning, Ms. Meadows. The Court has now been
22 informed you wish to change your plea in this case pursuant to
23 your written plea agreement. So if you'll please come up to
24 the lectern, along with your counsel, we'll begin by having you
25 sworn in by the courtroom deputy.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 THE COURTROOM DEPUTY: Ma'am, if you'll raise your
2 right hand.

3 (The Defendant Is Sworn.)

4 THE COURTROOM DEPUTY: Would you please state your
5 name for the record.

6 THE DEFENDANT: Taylor Meadows.

7 THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Meadows.

8 Before I accept your guilty plea, there are a number
9 of questions I need to ask you to assure your plea is valid.

10 Do you understand you're now under oath, and if you
11 answer any of my questions falsely, your answers may later be
12 used against you in another prosecution for perjury or making a
13 false statement?

14 THE DEFENDANT: (Moving head up and down.)

15 THE COURT: Do you understand that?

16 THE DEFENDANT: (Moving head up and down.)

17 THE COURT: Speak up, yes or no, so the court
18 reporter can hear you.

19 Okay. All right. You've given us your name. Do you
20 go by any other names?

21 THE DEFENDANT: No.

22 THE COURT: And, Ms. Meadows, are you a citizen of
23 the United States?

24 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

25 THE COURT: Were you born here, or are you a

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 naturalized citizen?

2 THE DEFENDANT: I was born here.

3 THE COURT: How old are you, please?

4 THE DEFENDANT: 27.

5 THE COURT: How far did you go in any schooling?

6 THE DEFENDANT: College.

7 THE COURT: Any difficulties at the present time
8 reading or writing in any way?

9 THE DEFENDANT: No.

10 THE COURT: Have you ever suffered from or been
11 treated for any mental health illness or addiction to narcotic
12 drugs of any kind?

13 THE DEFENDANT: Mental health, yes.

14 THE COURT: All right. Any difficulties in that
15 regard, do they at the present time interfere in any way with
16 your ability to communicate with your attorney or otherwise
17 participate in these proceedings?

18 THE DEFENDANT: No.

19 THE COURT: Have you taken any drugs, medicine,
20 pills, or alcoholic beverage of any kind within the last 24
21 hours?

22 THE DEFENDANT: No.

23 THE COURT: Do you understand what's happening here
24 today?

25 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

THE COURT: Mr. Brown, do you consider the defendant competent to enter a plea of guilty to the charged offenses?

3 MR. BROWN: I do, Your Honor.

4 THE COURT: All right. Ms. Meadows, have you
5 received a copy of the indictment against you?

6 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

7 THE COURT: Have you had ample opportunity to discuss
8 the charges against you in your case with your lawyer?

9 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

10 THE COURT: Have you told your lawyer everything you
11 know about this case?

12 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

13 THE COURT: Do you believe your lawyer is fully aware
14 on all the facts on which the charges are based?

15 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

16 THE COURT: Has your lawyer advised you as to the
17 nature and meaning of the charges?

18 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

19 THE COURT: Has your lawyer advised you as to the
20 elements of the offenses charged which the government must
21 prove beyond a reasonable doubt?

22 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

23 THE COURT: Has your lawyer advised you as to any
24 defense you may have to the charges?

25 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 THE COURT: Has your lawyer explained the terms of
2 the plea agreement to you?

3 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

4 THE COURT: Have you and your lawyer discussed any
5 maximum possible penalty, including any imprisonment, fine, and
6 term of supervised release, as well as any mandatory minimum
7 penalty?

8 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

9 THE COURT: Have you and your lawyer discussed any
10 applicable forfeiture, the Court's authority to order
11 restitution and to impose a special assessment?

12 In other words, have you talked about part of the
13 potential punishment range --

14 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

15 THE COURT: -- the forfeiture, restitution, and
16 special assessments, have you been able to discuss that with
17 your attorney?

18 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

19 THE COURT: And are you satisfied with the advice
20 your attorney has given you?

21 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

22 THE COURT: Mr. Brown, are you satisfied the
23 defendant understands the charges and elements of the offenses
24 charged?

25 MR. BROWN: I do, Your Honor.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 THE COURT: And the legal meaning of the words used
2 in the indictment and in the plea agreement?

3 MR. BROWN: I am, Your Honor.

4 THE COURT: All right. Next, Ms. Meadows, I need to
5 talk to you about certain constitutional rights that you waive
6 or give up by pleading guilty.

7 Do you understand you have a right to plead not
8 guilty to any offense charged against you and to persist in
9 that plea?

10 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

11 THE COURT: Do you understand you would then have the
12 right to a trial by jury, during which you would also have the
13 right to the assistance of counsel for your defense?

14 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

15 THE COURT: Do you understand you'd have the right to
16 see and hear all the witnesses and have them cross-examined in
17 your defense, as well as the right on your own part not to
18 testify, unless you chose to do so in your own defense?

19 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

20 THE COURT: Do you understand you would have the
21 right to compel the attendance of witnesses to testify on your
22 behalf?

23 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

24 THE COURT: Do you understand by entering this plea
25 of guilty, if accepted by the Court, there will be no trial,

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 and you will have given up the right to a trial of any kind, as
2 well as those other rights associated with the trial that I've
3 described to you?

4 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

5 THE COURT: Do you also understand you'll be giving
6 up the right not to be compelled to incriminate yourself, that
7 is, the right to remain silent, as well as the right to require
8 the United States to prove you guilty beyond a reasonable
9 doubt?

10 THE DEFENDANT: (Moving head up and down.)

11 THE COURT: All right. Now, as to the voluntariness
12 of your plea, has any person, including an officer or agent of
13 the government, put any pressure on you, mental or physical, to
14 force you to plead guilty?

15 THE DEFENDANT: No.

16 THE COURT: All right. Now looking at your plea
17 agreement itself, do you understand you're agreeing to be held
18 responsible for a mixture and substance containing a
19 combination of heroin and fentanyl that included at least
20 8 grams but less than 16 grams of a detectable amount of
21 fentanyl?

22 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

23 THE COURT: Next, and I'm looking at Paragraph 9 now,
24 do you understand your plea agreement contains provisions
25 waiving certain rights, including the right to appeal or

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 collaterally attack your sentence?

2 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

3 THE COURT: Paragraph 9A provides you agree not to
4 file a direct appeal of your conviction or sentence. Do you
5 understand that?

6 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

7 THE COURT: Do you understand the only exception to
8 this waiver of direct appeal is you retain the right to appeal
9 a sentence imposed above the Sentencing Guideline range
10 determined by the Court or above any mandatory minimum sentence
11 deemed applicable by the Court, whichever is greater?

12 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

13 THE COURT: Next, Paragraph 9B -- or under
14 Paragraph 9B, you are waiving the right to file any motions or
15 pleadings pursuant to 28 United States Code Section 2255 or to
16 collaterally attack your conviction or sentence.

17 Do you understand that?

18 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

19 THE COURT: Do you understand the only exception to
20 this waiver is you retain the right to raise by -- excuse me,
21 you retain the right to raise by way of collateral review,
22 under Section 2255, claims of ineffective assistance of counsel
23 or prosecutorial misconduct?

24 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

25 THE COURT: Finally, Paragraph 9C provides you will

 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 not request to receive from any department or agency of the
2 United States any records pertaining to the investigation or
3 prosecution of this case.

4 Do you understand this?

5 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

6 THE COURT: Any questions about these waiver
7 provisions in your plea agreement or any of the other
8 provisions of your plea agreement?

9 THE DEFENDANT: No.

10 THE COURT: Mr. Brown, do you wish to waive reading
11 of the indictment?

12 MR. BROWN: I do, Your Honor, yes.

13 THE COURT: Mr. Quencer, at this time, if the
14 government would please state its case against the defendant,
15 including the charges, the elements and factual basis for the
16 elements of the charges, and the maximum possible punishment.

17 MR. QUENCER: Yes, Your Honor.

18 The defendant will plead guilty to the following
19 counts of the indictment:

20 The lesser included offense as to Count 1, which is a
21 conspiracy to distribute and possess with the intent to
22 distribute a mixture and substance containing fentanyl and
23 heroin, in violation of 21 U.S.C. 846, 841(a)(1) and
24 841(b)(1)(C).

25 The punishment for this offense is a term of

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 imprisonment of not more than 20 years, a maximum fine of
2 \$1 million, a term of supervised release of at least three
3 years up to life, and a mandatory special assessment of \$100.

4 As to Count 2, possession of firearms in furtherance
5 of a drug-trafficking crime, in violation of 18 United States
6 Code 924(c), the punishment for this offense is a mandatory
7 minimum term of imprisonment of five years, which must be run
8 consecutive with any other offense in the indictment, and I
9 believe that offense runs up to life, a term of supervised
10 release of up to five years, a fine of \$250,000, and a
11 mandatory special assessment of \$100.

12 The elements as to these offenses are as follows:

13 As a lesser included offense, as to Count 1, the
14 defendant conspired or agreed with at least one other person to
15 violate federal drug laws, specifically 21 U.S.C. 841(a)(1),
16 which is the defendant knowingly and intentionally joined the
17 conspiracy, the defendant participated in the conspiracy, and
18 the overall scope of the defendant's involvement in the
19 conspiracy was a mixture and substance containing a quantity of
20 fentanyl and a mixture and substance containing quantity of
21 heroin.

22 As to Count 2, the defendant committed the elements
23 of a drug-trafficking crime prosecutable in federal court. The
24 defendant possessed firearms, and the possession of the
25 firearms was in furtherance of the drug-trafficking crime.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 In support of the defendant's plea, the government
2 and the defendant agree and stipulate to the following facts,
3 which satisfy the offense elements:

4 In early 2019, the Knox County Sheriff's Office
5 received information from a confidential informant that the
6 codefendant, Darrien Daniels, was the source of heroin.
7 Daniels was known to law enforcement, as they had received
8 information in the previous year that he sold heroin in Knox
9 County. Confidential informant assisted law enforcement by
10 conducting two controlled buys of heroin.

11 The first controlled buy occurred at a commercial lot
12 in Knox County where Daniels left his residence at 7721 Gilmore
13 Lane, Corryton, Tennessee, prior to meeting with confidential
14 informant. The second controlled buy occurred at Daniels'
15 residence at 7721 Gilmore Lane.

16 The confidential informant obtained heroin for money
17 from Daniels during both buys. The controlled buys occurred
18 within a week of one another. After the second controlled buy,
19 law enforcement obtained a search warrant for Daniels'
20 residence.

21 On April the 5th, 2019, officers executed a search
22 warrant at 7721 Gilbert Lane. Daniels was present at the
23 residence when the search warrant was executed, along with the
24 defendant, Taylor Meadows. During the search, law enforcement
25 located a quantity of heroin and fentanyl, scales, multiple

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 cell phones, a large sum of U.S. currency, a .40 caliber Kahr
2 handgun, a .40 caliber Taurus handgun, a .38 caliber Smith &
3 Wesson revolver, a 9-millimeter SCCY handgun, .38 caliber
4 ammunition, .40 caliber ammunition, and 9-millimeter
5 ammunition. Three of the firearms were found in the nightstand
6 right next to Daniels' side of the bed. The other firearm was
7 found on the defendant Taylor Meadows' side of the bed.

8 The defendant admits that she possessed the firearm
9 that was found on her side of the bed. The defendant also
10 admits that she possessed the firearm in furtherance of the
11 drug-trafficking business.

12 The defendant agrees that while participating in the
13 conspiracy, she personally conspired to distribute or to
14 possess with intent to distribute within the Eastern District
15 of Tennessee a mixture and substance containing a combination
16 of heroin and fentanyl that included at least 8 grams but less
17 than 60 grams -- 16 grams of a detectable amount of fentanyl.

18 THE COURT: All right. Thank you, Mr. Quencer.

19 Returning to you now, Ms. Meadows, did you hear the
20 government's case against you?

21 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

22 THE COURT: And do you agree with the government's
23 summary of what you did, outlined in your plea agreement and by
24 the government here today in Court?

25 MR. BROWN: Go ahead and answer the question.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

2 THE COURT: The answer is yes?

3 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

4 MR. BROWN: Yeah, Your Honor. I'm just -- she was
5 pointing out there's a typographical error in Paragraph 3B. It
6 should be the search warrant is actually -- it's 7721 Gilmore
7 Lane, not Gilbert Lane. So we can just, you know, scratch that
8 out. I think that will be fine.

9 THE COURT: Other than that correction as to the name
10 of the street name, do you otherwise agree with all the facts
11 in the plea agreement?

12 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

13 THE COURT: Do you understand these may not be all
14 the facts of the case, and that other facts may be relevant to
15 sentencing, and that both you and the government retain the
16 right to present additional facts to the Court at the time of
17 sentencing?

18 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

19 THE COURT: All right. Do you understand you're
20 pleading guilty, first, to the lesser included offense of
21 Count 1 of the indictment, that is conspiracy to distribute and
22 possess with intent to distribute a mixture and substance
23 containing a quantity of fentanyl, a Schedule II controlled
24 substance, and heroin, a Schedule I controlled substance, in
25 violation of 21 United States Code Sections 846, 841(a)(1), and

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 (b) (1) (C) ?

2 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

3 THE COURT: Do you understand the elements of this
4 charge against you?

5 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

6 THE COURT: Do you understand the punishment for this
7 offense, Count 1, is a term of imprisonment of not more than 20
8 years, a maximum fine of \$1 million, supervised release of at
9 least three years to life, forfeiture, and a \$100 assessment?

10 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

11 THE COURT: All right. As to the lesser included
12 offense of Count 1 in the indictment, charging you with this
13 violation of 21 United States Code Sections 846, 841(a)(1), and
14 (b) (1) (C), how do you plead?

15 THE DEFENDANT: Guilty.

16 THE COURT: Do you understand you're also pleading
17 guilty to Count 2 of the indictment, that is, possession of
18 firearms in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime in
19 violation of 18 United States Code Section 924(c) (1) (A) ?

20 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

21 THE COURT: Do you understand the elements of this
22 charge against you?

23 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

24 THE COURT: Do you understand the punishment for this
25 offense is a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment of five

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 years to life to run consecutive with any of the other offenses
2 in the indictment, supervised release of up to five years, a
3 fine of up to \$250,000, forfeiture, and a \$100 assessment?

4 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

5 THE COURT: As to Count 2 of the indictment, charging
6 you with this violation of 18 United States Code Section
7 924(c) (1) (A), how do you plead?

8 THE DEFENDANT: Guilty.

9 THE COURT: As to both Count 1 and Count 2, do you
10 understand what you're pleading guilty to?

11 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

12 THE COURT: And are you offering to plead guilty
13 because you are in fact guilty?

14 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

15 THE COURT: All right. Ms. Meadows, if your plea is
16 accepted, you'll be adjudged guilty of a felony, and this may
17 deprive you of valuable civil rights, such as the right to
18 vote, hold public office, serve on a jury, and possess any kind
19 of firearms.

20 The Court also advises you that the Court is required
21 to consider any applicable Sentencing Guidelines, but may vary
22 from those Guidelines under some circumstances.

23 Have you had the opportunity to discuss with your
24 attorney the possible application of these advisory Guidelines
25 to your case?

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

2 THE COURT: The Court further advises you that should
3 it accept your plea, your sentence could be enhanced or
4 increased due to any prior convictions you may have.

In addition, if the Court accepts your plea of guilty, a judgment of conviction will result, and this conviction may be used against you in the future, if you should be convicted in any subsequent proceeding, to enhance or increase any sentence you might receive for any future offenses you might commit.

11 In other words, your guilty plea in this case could
12 hurt you in the future in the event of future wrongdoing.

13 Do you understand that?

14 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

15 THE COURT: All right. Do you also understand you'll
16 not be permitted to withdraw your plea on the basis of the
17 sentence you might receive?

18 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

19 THE COURT: All right. The Court notes the
20 government has not made any rec -- has not made any agreement
21 to recommend a particular sentence, and your sentence is to be
22 determined by the Court in conformity with any appropriate
23 sentencing factors, including any applicable Sentencing
24 Guidelines.

25 Do you understand that?

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

2 THE COURT: The Court will not be able to determine
3 an appropriate sentence until having received the presentence
4 report, and you and the government will have an opportunity to
5 consider and challenge the facts in that report.

In addition and under some circumstances, the government may have the right to appeal the sentence imposed by this Court.

9 The Court advises you that parole in the federal
10 system has been abolished, and if you are sentenced to prison,
11 you will not be released on parole.

12 Ms. Meadows, are you presently on probation as to any
13 previous offense or parole from any penal institution?

14 THE DEFENDANT: No.

15 THE COURT: The Court is also required to inform you
16 as a condition of any period of supervised release that might
17 be imposed in this case, such supervised release would be
18 revoked should you be found in possession of any controlled
19 substance or firearm. This revocation is mandatory under
20 federal law.

21 Knowing these various penalties, do you still wish to
22 plead guilty?

23 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

24 THE COURT: The Court has observed the appearance of
25 this defendant and her responsiveness to the questions asked.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 Based upon these observations and answers to the questions, the
2 Court finds the defendant, Ms. Taylor Meadows, to be in
3 possession of her faculties and competent to plead guilty.

4 The defendant is not under the influence of narcotics
5 or other drugs or alcohol.

6 She knowingly waives her constitutional rights to
7 trial and other rights afforded to persons accused of crime.

8 The factual basis of this guilty plea has been
9 established, and the defendant understands the nature and
10 element of the offense to which the plea is offered and the
11 maximum and minimum penalties provided by law for the offense.

12 The defendant has offered to plead guilty knowingly
13 and voluntarily; accordingly, the plea of guilty will be
14 accepted, and the defendant is adjudged guilty of violating
15 Title 21 U.S. Code Sections 846, 841(a)(1) and (b)(1)(C), the
16 lesser included offense thereto, that being, on or about
17 January 1, 2018 through on or about April 5, 2019, in the
18 Eastern District of Tennessee, the defendant did combine,
19 conspire, confederate, and agree with at least one other person
20 to knowingly, intentionally, and without authority distribute
21 and possess with intent to distribute a mixture and substance
22 containing a quantity of fentanyl and heroin.

23 The defendant is also adjudged guilty of violating
24 Title 18 U.S. Code Section 924(c)(1)(A), that is, on or about
25 April 5, 2019, in the Eastern District of Tennessee, the

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 defendant did knowingly possess firearms in furtherance of a
2 drug-trafficking crime for which she may be prosecuted in a
3 court of the United States, that is, conspiracy to distribute
4 and possess with intent to distribute controlled substances, as
5 set forth in Count 1 of the indictment.

6 Ms. Meadows, do you understand you'll be asked to
7 give information to the probation officer for the presentence
8 report, and that you may have your attorney present with you at
9 that time if you wish?

10 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

11 THE COURT: You and your attorney will be permitted
12 to read the presentence report before the sentencing hearing.

13 Within 14 calendar days of filing of the report, all
14 parties must file with the Court any objections that may have
15 to the report or notice of no objections, pursuant to Local
16 Rule 83.9(c).

17 And, Ms. Taylor -- excuse me, Ms. Meadows, you're
18 advised that at that sentencing hearing, both you and your
19 attorney will be permitted to speak on your behalf.

20 I understand we're going to set sentencing in this
21 case, subject to any necessary calendaring changes, for
22 Wednesday, June 3, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.

23 I also understand the defendant will remain detained
24 pending sentencing.

25 Any other matters to bring up at this time,

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 Mr. Quencer, on behalf of the government?

2 MR. QUENCER: There are not, Your Honor.

3 THE COURT: Thank you.

4 Mr. Brown, on behalf of the defendant?

5 MR. BROWN: No, Your Honor. Thank you.

6 THE COURT: Thank you. We'll stand in recess.

7 THE COURTROOM DEPUTY: All rise. This honorable
8 court shall stand in recess.

9 (Proceedings adjourned at 11:20 a.m.)

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

1 **CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER**

2 STATE OF FLORIDA

3 COUNTY OF HILLSBOROUGH

4 I, Rebekah M. Lockwood, RDR, CRR, do hereby certify
5 that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the
6 foregoing proceedings; and that the foregoing pages constitute
7 a true and complete computer-aided transcription of my original
8 stenographic notes to the best of my knowledge, skill, and
9 ability.

10 I further certify that I am not a relative, employee,
11 attorney, or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative
12 or employee of any of the parties' attorneys or counsel
13 connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in
14 the action.

15 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand at Tampa,
16 Hillsborough County, Florida this 17th day of August, 2020.

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REBEKAH M. LOCKWOOD, RDR, CRR
Official Court Reporter
United States District Court
Middle District of Florida